



Welcome to the customer service module. This module is 3 of 5 that make up the course and will take about 15 minutes to complete.

Good customer service is essential in all WIC clinics. However, on occasion, there are some complaints from WIC participants. In this module you will learn how to handle them when they arise.



Here are the topics covered in this module.

At the end of this module you will be able to:

- Identify a civil rights complaint and know what to do if you receive one
- Understand actions or policies that have the effect of discriminating
- Understand how conflict resolution is related to civil rights discrimination, and
- Identify one new technique you can use to resolve conflicts.



First let's start with a definition of discrimination.

WIC staff must not discriminate against WIC applicants, participants or guardians based on race, color, national origin, sex, age, or disability.

Good customer service is treating clients fairly and providing meaningful and equal access to WIC services and benefits for all people.



Think about when you felt like an O among all the Xs.

For example, you visited a foreign country and didn't speak the language and didn't look like the majority of the people. When you went through a divorce and felt out of place, establishing your new life. Just started a new job and didn't know anyone or how the agency operates.

Think about how a WIC applicant, participant, or guardian might like to be treated. How would you like to be treated by WIC staff if you were a WIC participant?



Discrimination can occur intentionally or by neglect, by actions or by lack of actions. Sometimes we do not know that we are discriminating. A procedure may have the effect of discriminating when it is used differently or unequally for one participant than for another participant. An example might be if Hispanic and African American participants who arrive late for their WIC appointment are routinely rescheduled while white participants are worked into the clinic day.

ILLEGAL DISCRIMINATION



- Exclusion of eligible persons
- Unequal services or portion of WIC food packages
- Issuance of WIC checks in a way that results in denying or limiting benefits to a specific group

Illegal discrimination is providing services or benefits to people in a different manner because of race, color, national origin, age, sex or disability.

Let's take a look at a few examples.

- Excluding eligible persons from receiving benefits (such as WIC checks), services (including nutrition education) or eligibility is illegal discrimination.
- It also includes providing unequal services or lesser services. For example, not providing an interpreter could be discrimination based on national origin.
- An example of denying or limiting benefits is issuing WIC checks in a place, time or manner that results in denying or limiting benefits to a specific group of people. A discriminating action is establishing a clinic in an area which has the effect of limiting the availability of program benefits or services. In order to avoid discrimination, it would be necessary to hold a WIC clinic in a location where there is a high population of a particular ethnic group living in the county.

ILLEGAL DISCRIMINATION

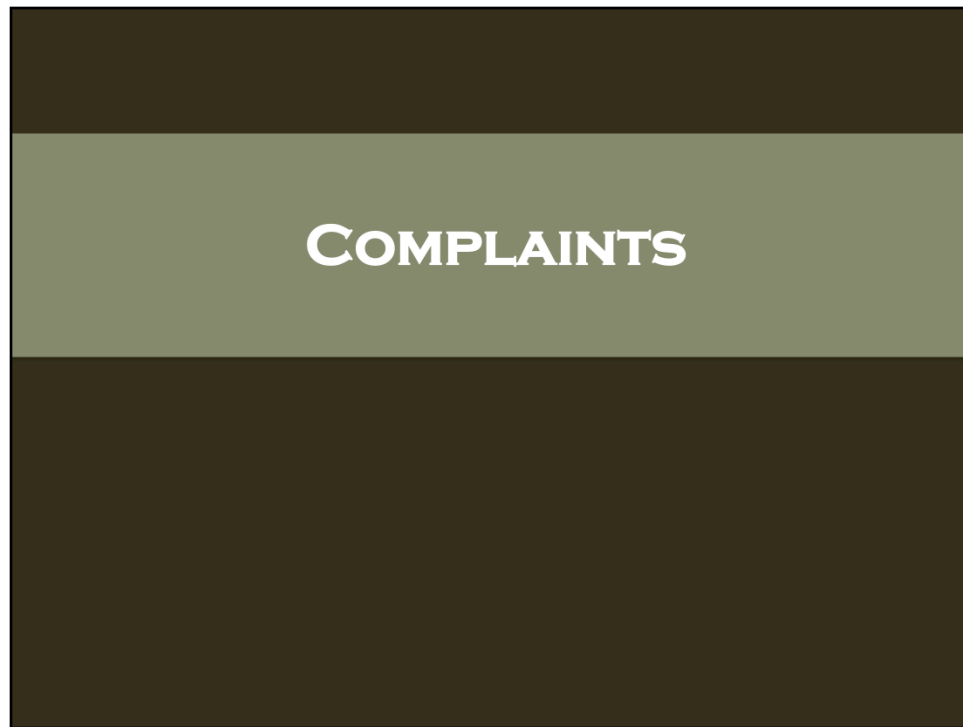
- Segregation of persons
- Failure to apply the same WIC eligibility criteria
- Certification based solely on race, color, national origin, age, sex, or disability



• Another example of illegal discrimination includes segregating participants through scheduling; for example, white participants on Mondays and Hmong on Fridays. However, it is acceptable to have an interpreter scheduled on Tuesdays and to schedule WIC participants on Tuesdays who need this interpreter. To avoid discrimination, we must not require the participant to come to the appointment that day if the participant cannot come that day. Arrangements must be made to serve that participant with an interpreter on another day.

• Illegal discrimination is failure to apply the same eligibility criteria like proof of residency, identity, and income to all applicants.

• It also includes certifying potentially eligible persons solely based on race, color, national origin, age, sex or disability. An example of this might be enrolling applicants just because they are of the white race or only enrolling children but not women.



So, now that you've seen some examples of illegal discrimination let's consider how complaints are resolved.

*What might you do to
handle a complaint?*

Check all that apply.

- ☐ Listen
- ☐ Understand what happened
- ☐ Tell them you will get back to them later
- ☐ Identify the real problem
- ☐ Agree on a solution
- ☐ Share your side of the story
- ☐ Explain the clinic procedures

In this exercise, select what might you do to handle a complaint? The correct answers are highlighted. Click ahead to learn more.

Correct Answers:

Listen, Understand what happened, Identify the real problem, Agree on a solution, Explain the clinic procedures

DEALING WITH A COMPLAINT	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Listen• Understand what happened• Identify the real problem• Agree on a solution

When a complaint is made, talk with the person about the complaint and provide explanations.

Listen to the participant and let her tell you her side of the story. Make an effort to understand what may have happened. Help identify a solution, if possible. Remaining calm will help the participant to remain calm.

Acknowledge what was said. Listen without interrupting and make eye contact. Show an interest to help the participant work out the issue without statements that refer to “WIC Policy” or “WIC rules.” Avoid making excuses. Express disappointment that the situation occurred.

Identify the real problem by asking tactful questions. Repeat what you have heard and confirm if you understood them correctly. State what you think may be the real problem and offer possible solutions.

Work toward a solution together. Respect their perspective of the situation. Sincerely agree with what is possible and offer possible solutions. For example say “What appointment times will work for you?” Try to make positive statements. Summarize what you will do and carry out the plan.

Drag and Drop the handling a discrimination complaint actions on the left into What Staff Should Do or Should Not Do.

Determine whether discrimination took place	What Staff Should Do
Don't discourage efforts to file	
Print the form in ROSIE	
Notify the WIC Director immediately	
Provide details to the WIC Operations Coordinator at the State WIC Office	What Staff Should Not Do
Investigate discrimination complaints	

In this exercise identify what staff should do and should not do when handling a discrimination complaint. Click ahead after completing the exercise.

What Staff Should Do: Don't discourage efforts to file, Print the form in ROSIE, Notify the WIC Director immediately, Provide details to the WIC Operations Coordinator at the State WIC Office

What Staff Should Not Do: Determine whether discrimination took place, Investigate discrimination complaints

Knowing what to do can be tricky, especially if this is the first time you have been involved in a discrimination complaint. More details can be found in the WIC Operations Manual, Policy 10.51.

If the complaint cannot be resolved by talking with the client, follow these steps:

- Don't discourage the participant's or guardian's efforts to file a discrimination complaint
- Offer to print the Discrimination Complaint form in ROSIE for the complainant.
- Notify the WIC Director immediately about the discrimination complaint.
- Inform the WIC Operations Coordinator at the State WIC Office if a complaint is anticipated or an actual complaint has been filed.

WIC and agency staff are prohibited from determining whether discrimination took place or if the complaint is a program matter. Staff are prohibited from investigating discrimination complaints, notify the State WIC Office.

WIC NON-DISCRIMINATION STATEMENT

In accordance with Federal law and U. S. Department of Agriculture policy, this institution is prohibited from discriminating on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, age, or disability. To file a complaint of discrimination, write USDA, Director, Office of Civil Rights, 1400 Independence Avenue, SW, Washington, D.C. 20250-9410 or call (800) 795-3272 or (202) 720-6382 (TTY). USDA is an equal opportunity provider and employer.

Remember this statement from the first module? Just a reminder that this is required on all WIC materials.

RIGHT TO FILE A COMPLAINT

Any person alleging discrimination on the basis of race, age, disability, color, sex or national origin can file a complaint within 180 days of the alleged discriminatory action



Who do you think can file a complaint?

Anyone can file a complaint

- members of a family
- friends or associates
- witnesses
- employees of an agency
- vendors, farmers, and
- medical professionals.

CIVIL RIGHTS COMPLAINTS

DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH SERVICES
Division of Public Health
F-40062 (08/06)

Project Name _____
Project Phone _____
Mailing Address _____
City, State, Zip _____

STATE OF WISCONSIN

WIC PROGRAM
CIVIL RIGHTS DISCRIMINATION COMPLAINT FORM

This form may be used for WIC Farmers' Market Nutrition Program (FMNP) purposes.
Participation in WIC is voluntary. Personally identifiable information is used to determine WIC eligibility and may be disclosed to others only as allowed by state and federal laws.

Guardian's Name _____
Address _____
City, State, Zip _____

In accordance with Federal law and U.S. Department of Agriculture policy, WIC is prohibited from discriminating on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, age or disability. If you think you have been discriminated against, please complete this form and send it to:

Regional Director
Civil Rights/EEO
USDA, FNS, MWRD
77 W Jackson Blvd., 20th Floor
Chicago, IL 60604-3591

-OR-

USDA Director
Office of Civil Rights
1400 Independence Ave, SW
Washington, D.C. 20250-9410
or call (800) 795-3272 or
(202) 720-6382 (TTY)

USDA is an Equal Opportunity Provider and Employer

Your name: _____
Your address: _____
Telephone number where you can be contacted: _____
E-mail address (if available): _____
Name and title of person you believe discriminated against you: _____

Address: _____
Date of discrimination: _____
Check the type of discrimination: race ___ color ___ national origin ___ sex ___ age ___ disability ___
Please describe what happened: _____

As you know from the previous module, the Discrimination Complaint form is available in ROSIE. Go to the Letters drop down in C & E and select the form to print in the English, Spanish or Hmong language. The guardian may complete it and send to USDA. The guardian name and address will automatically fill into the space.

CIVIL RIGHTS COMPLAINTS	Date of discrimination: _____
	Check the type of discrimination: race ___ color ___ national origin ___ sex ___ age ___ disability ___
	Please describe what happened: _____ _____ _____ _____
	Name and address of any witnesses: _____ _____ _____
	Your signature: _____ Date: _____

Staff must write up the complaint on the ROSIE form for those people who do not want to fill out the form, or for complaints given verbally. Another option for people who do not want to fill out the form is to telephone their complaint using the 800# or the number for TTY.

Because anonymous complaints must be investigated, staff must write the complaint on the form stored in WICPRO and send it to USDA.

The example below is a sign of poor treatment to the participant and guardian, including intimidation, threats, acts of getting revenge and discrimination.

Asking the participant to bring additional documents that really aren't needed.

{ True } {False}

True or False, The example listed is a sign of poor treatment to the participant and guardian. After completing the exercise, click ahead.

Questions & Answers:

1. Asking the participant to bring additional documents that really aren't needed. (True)
2. The participant is told to come back another day for her WIC checks. (True)
3. The participant is told she has to wait an extra month for her children's next certification appointment. (True)
4. WIC staff are polite and smile at all participants. (False)
5. Staff complain to each other in the reception area about a participant and what happened the last time she came to WIC. (True)
6. Staff tell the participant to continue to look for her lost checks before they can be replaced. (False, this is standard procedure per policy.)
7. The health screener does not smile or talk with the mother while weighing and measuring her child. (True)
9. At the certification appointment, the participant has not brought proof of residency. Staff tell the participant that if she doesn't bring proof of residency next month, she won't be able to get her checks. (False, this is policy.)
10. A participant picks up checks late and the staff states, "You're late and you should know by now to pick up checks on your pick up day." (True)



When an individual makes a complaint, they should be treated with respect. They should be treated the same as other participants are treated. Staff should treat them as if they did not make a complaint. There shall be no poor treatment of people who make complaints. Examples of poor treatment include intimidation, threats, and discrimination.

There must not be any acts of getting revenge.

People who complain should not unnecessarily be denied WIC checks or be taken off the WIC Program.

They should not unnecessarily have to wait for their appointment or be asked to bring additional documents that really aren't needed.

When providing WIC services to a person who has complained, staff should be polite and not display a hostile attitude toward them.

Staff should not make unfavorable comments about the individual.

CHECK WHAT YOU KNOW

An applicant who is denied WIC benefits alleges discrimination and wants to file a complaint. You know that discrimination was not a factor in the decision. What should you do?

Type in your answers here and then press the submit button.

Check what you know by answering the questions. After completing the exercise, click ahead.

1. An applicant who is denied WIC benefits alleges discrimination and wants to file a complaint. You know that discrimination was not a factor in the decision. What should you do?
ANSWER: You should provide information on how to file a complaint. You should never discourage anyone from filing a complaint if he or she believes discrimination has occurred.
2. A WIC Director is very angry that the person in the previous situation filed a discrimination complaint and took up a lot of her time and made her look bad. She tells her co-workers to watch out for this “troublemaker.” The next time the person visits, the participant encounters “attitude” from staff. What are the civil rights violations described here?
ANSWER: This is an example of retaliation. Even if no discrimination was found based on the original complaint, retaliation against her friends or family or anyone in the office that cooperated in the investigation is a serious matter.
3. A participant expresses a complaint verbally to an intake staff person. She feels she’s been discriminated against because she’s a pregnant teen. She becomes angry and storms out of the clinic without completing a discrimination complaint form. What would you do?
ANSWER: A complaint needs to be filed. The intake staff person can work with the Director to complete the form accurately and send to USDA. Then USDA will investigate the complaint.

QUESTIONS?

- Review policies 10.14, 10.51
- Ask Project WIC Director
- Contact Regional Office
Nutrition Consultant or
Milwaukee County WIC Office
- WIC Operations Coordinator
at State WIC Office



This wraps up module 3 of 5. Have any questions? Use the resources that are listed here.

